

The Growth of the High School Library in Chicago

IN ALL the high schools from their organization there have been a few books. These may have been, as a graduate of 1873 relates, only an unabridged dictionary, Webster's or Worcester's, and two or three other books, whose regular abiding place was a convenient window sill; or there may have been included a set of Chamber's or the American Encyclopedia and a few books valuable in the elementary work in science, and later, Lippincott's Biographical Dictionary and the Pronouncing Gazetteer of the World, with the various lexicons or dictionaries for the study of the foreign languages. In the "annexed districts" there was the District Library containing a varied collection of the works of standard and popular authors, which the citizens had bought and to which they had access. In some cases this library was under the supervision of a teacher, and was open to the public for the exchange of books one afternoon each week.

In connection with this library there was in some districts an "Illinois School District" library provided by the State. Englewood still has a few of the old books belonging to one of these libraries.

Book lists for use in the schools were, even in those days, a part of the Course of Study. That printed early in the 1890's contained a list of books recommended for the general reading of the pupils in history and fiction. In 1892 or 1893, under the direction of Dr. A. F. Nightingale, then Assistant Superintendent for the high schools, the well-known lists of "Supplementary Home Reading Books" for the English classes were made. Forty books for each of the four years of the high-school course, including works in history, biography, science, fiction, poetry, and essays were selected. As in some schools these books were distributed among English teachers, who cared for them, and as each pupil was required to read ten of them in connection with his English work each year,

they formed virtually a "departmental library". When the schools became larger, it was found more economical to collect these books into one place, and the general library was made prominent.

The last of these "Forty Home Reading Books" was supplied about the year 1898-99. For some time thereafter, the principal source of the supply of books for the school libraries was the proceeds from the two paid entertainments given each year by the individual school.

In 1907-08 there were printed in *The Bulletin*, then published by the board of education, lists of supplementary reading books for the teachers, for the pupils in high schools, and for pupils in the grammar schools. About this time the Board authorized for each school a per capita fund of a few cents. This money was to be used for the purchase of such reference books from the recommended list and such other books from the supplementary reading lists as the principal and teachers thought necessary. The fund has always been small and the supply of books inadequate for the rapidly-increasing membership of the individual schools and the demands made by modern methods of instruction.

The general library has continued in the care of a teacher, who has been relieved of the care of a "division room" with its accompanying records and sometimes of one class or recitation. In the days of small schools and the comparatively small use of the library in the daily work, this seemed adequate provision. However, the rapid growth of the laboratory method in all subjects, and the increasing use of books has made the general library of greater importance and created a demand for bibliographies and a card catalogue that brings out all the subjects treated in each book on the library shelves. This means the adoption of modern library methods. The teacher in charge must be both a teacher and a librarian trained in technical processes, and has had to attempt to do for her community both the work that only a teacher can do and that of the trained librarian. This requires more time for detail than the arrangement presented above provides for, and better equipment in the library itself.

Recognizing these facts some four or five years ago, the English section of the Chicago High and Normal School Asso-

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ciation made, through a "questionnaire" sent to all the city high schools, an investigation of the conditions then existing; information as to the size and seating capacity of the rooms, shelving for reference and other books, arrangements for the use of reference books, and for the circulation of the books—in general, whatever would arouse interest in the libraries was sought. The report was prepared and presented to the Section by Miss Elizabeth E. Buchanan, of the Hyde Park High School.

I remember distinctly entering the meeting late and hearing something like this: "—from the commodious quarters of Calumet without books (the Calumet building was then new) to the very small and poorly-lighted rooms at Englewood with over 2,000 books in constant use."

Later I learned that a very full report had been made—it has always seemed to me an illustration of the unthrift characteristic of the way in which some of our hardest and most valuable work has been done that this report was not in some way made public or at least accessible to those who were most interested; more possibly could have been done to better conditions.

At a meeting of this same association in December, 1909, Mr. H. S. Vaile presented the report of a committee on investigation and with it their recommendations, which were, substantially:

That in each school one teacher, who should be relieved of a division room and its records, and one class (the old arrangement), be selected to serve as librarian; this teacher to be familiar with the most approved methods of library administration, to catalogue fully the books; prepare them for the shelves, and to keep them in order; to supervise the circulation, prepare bibliographies, etc.—in short, to have all the information needed by teachers and pupils readily accessible.

Thus to the duties of a teacher of four classes, and these usually English or history, was to be added the duties of a regular librarian in a community where all reading is highly specialized. I have still a copy of a letter sent protesting against such an arrangement. The report served its purpose, in a way, for it aroused a desire to know how high-school libraries are administered in other cities, and the investigation



which has resulted in this series of papers and the movement which they represent, was begun.

The three papers in this series were presented at the meeting of the English section of the Chicago High and Normal School Association, May 11, 1912. The report and recommendations of the committee appointed by the teacher librarians in the high schools of Chicago, which will appear later, were heartily endorsed by the Section and a request made that these papers be put in some permanent form. This is possible through the kindness of Mr. Owen, who has placed at the disposal of the committee sufficient space to publish not only the three papers read but also additional material of general interest which has been gathered. The committee is encouraged in its efforts by the hearty endorsement which their recommendations have received from all the sections.

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